

(2)BVA.26

N. W. 85



22501495450





N. 18. 35

# JAPANESE HOUSEHOLD MAGIC.

A PAPER

BY

W. L. HILDBURGH, M.A., PH.D., M.J.S.

READ BEFORE THE

JAPAN SOCIETY OF LONDON,

MAY 13TH, 1908.

1908

General Library  
for the History  
and Understanding  
of Medicine

(2) BVA. 26

# JAPANESE HOUSEHOLD MAGIC.

By W. L. HILDBURGH, M.A., PH.D., M.J.S.

WHEN we think of magic—which may be defined, I think, as the attempt to control or to anticipate the natural course of operations or events by means which are recognised, more or less, as being supernatural or as based upon premises whose soundness is felt to be not wholly proven—we are apt to think of it as entirely within the hands of professed practitioners of the art, to whom resort the persons who require its performance. We are likely to forget that there are many occasions, in the general round of daily life, when magic is attempted by the ordinary man—though usually, indeed, without a thought of it as such—in the wearing of an amulet, for example, to take an instance familiar to every one, or the use of some word or formula to guard against the evil believed to follow upon some inauspicious speech or act, or in the half jesting performance of some small ceremony “to change the luck” in a game of chance. It is chiefly with this minor magic, of which, though they may represent it in its last stages of decay, the illustrations just given are typical, that we shall concern ourselves, and not with that magic undertaken principally by persons—such as the priests of certain sects, astrologers, or fortune-tellers—with whom magic is a profession. It is impossible, in the short time at my disposal, to give more than an outline of some parts of the subject, illustrating these by a few (out of many, in most cases) of the practices connected with them. For my ground, I have selected the home of a town-dweller of the middle class—a man to whom the protection of domestic animals or of crops, the control of the rain or of the wind, the foretelling of the weather, the guarding against noxious animals, and the like, are generally matters of no concern, and beyond its limits, or even



into the shop which forms, probably, an extension of it, we shall seldom go.

The fabric of this minor magic is, in Japan, of surprising extent, for there are special ceremonies or formulæ or amulets to fit all sorts of extraordinary occasions as well as all the ordinary happenings of daily life. The methods for securing a certain desired result are, however, far from being the same in all parts of the country, or even in all parts of the main island, and comparatively few, I think (though I may not speak with assurance) are common to the whole of Japan. Each district seems to have, as has each district in European countries, its own set of beliefs. There is, however, a strong element in some of the charms (such as a certain cure for toothache, for example, of which I have six distinct variants), which remains the same everywhere, although the remainder of the charm may vary widely with the locality. Many of the charms are, or were, common property, known to every housewife of the neighbourhood, but others, those less often required, were kept in mind only by certain people, usually some old woman or some priest, to whom, in case of necessity, their neighbours came for advice. The present generation, especially in the larger cities, knows but little of most of these things, and concerns itself hardly at all with them, for western medical science has taken the place of much of the old magic which had as its province the prevention or the relief of pain or disease, while modern education has modified the habits of mind wherein the conceptions underlying that magic were based. As a result, although folk-magic, in its various forms, is still very prevalent in Japan, it can only be a generation or two at most, under the present system of education, before it sinks to the very insignificant position that it holds in England at the present time. It is to be hoped that before the beliefs which compose it have disappeared from the life of the people, they will have been carefully recorded and, when possible, made accessible to European students of comparative folk-lore.

Their minor magical practices are called, by the Japanese, "*majinai*" (or, less often, "*o-majinai*"), while the same word is applied to the amulets of secular origin, which form the material parts of some of the charms, and not the term "*o-mamori*," "honourable protection," which seems to be reserved for amulets whose origin is religious. There appears to be considerable



uncertainty (though this most recorders of similar practices, I think, can testify is not peculiar to Japan) as to just which things are *majinai* and which are not ; this, however, is to be anticipated, since the people by whom many of the commoner *majinai* are used give, probably, no more thought to the reasonings on which those *majinai* are based than they give to the origins of any of the other household recipes or remedies which they use daily. I have a book, published at Kyoto about the year 1843, entitled "New Majinai, Incantations, and Means [for doing things]," in which written charms (frequently containing some religious element), and secular incantations and charms, are mixed indiscriminately with medical prescriptions, methods of removing different kinds of stains from various materials, advice to travellers, and the like. Mr. Aston, who touches on the subject of *majinai* in his book, *Shinto*, there calls attention to the apparently similar confusion of Bakin, the novelist, who published a number of those he had collected in the first volume of his *Yenzeki Zasshi*. Indeed, it is by no means always a simple matter, even for a European, to say whether a recipe has a physical or a magical basis, and one is often puzzled to know in which category to place recipes given as *majinai*.

The *majinai* have originated in various ways. There are some which, though rationally based, have been distorted ; others rest upon analogies, as exemplified in the magical processes common to most races, or upon pretence ; others have been derived through stories, either pure fiction or pseudo-history ; others depend upon peculiar anatomical beliefs ; others are, probably, the results of attempts, by the threatening of penalties, to inculcate manners or morality ; and others finally, upon such slender foundations as, to take a common type, a mere play upon words. The great development of this folk-magic amongst the Japanese is to be explained, I think, by their being not merely an ingenious and highly imaginative people who, living and thinking simply, developed their civilisation unhampered by the rigid scrutiny of results which lies at the root of modern science, but by their being also an assimilative people who have, probably, during their long use of the older beliefs (whether racial or foreign) continually accepted and absorbed beliefs newly brought in, just as they accept and absorb western ideas at the present time.

The household magic is used principally for the control of persons and of things (whether these be material or such as have their existence, according to our belief, only in the imagination), and it is mainly in this aspect that we shall concern ourselves with it. It is, however, employed also for divining, and, although this branch is largely in the hands of professional fortune-tellers, it is possible for the ordinary person, by means of certain popular books, such as almanacs or compilations of recipes, to make use, in some measure, of the professionals' principal means of inquiry—the combinations of the Chinese Eight Trigrams, astrology, palmistry, the study of the features, or the interpretation of dreams. While these means lie properly somewhat beyond the limits within which I purpose confining myself, there are others, as we shall see, which belong legitimately within our field of investigation. In discussing the subject we shall not attempt to deal with it in its entirety—indeed, there will be sections of the main divisions which we do not even touch—but we shall endeavour, rather, by means of illustrative examples, to gain a general idea of the principal processes by which its ends are sought. We shall take first the methods and means used for protection, next those relating to the routine of daily life, then those for the care of the body, and finally (with a brief interruption for divinatory processes) those concerned with the control of other persons.

The means through whose agency the household magic is applied are, broadly, amulets (including written or printed charms), words or sentences to be recited, motions or postures, and representatives of persons or things. While the ideas which underlie the applications of these comparatively few means are too numerous to be similarly briefly catalogued, there are three of such importance in their bearings on Japanese magic—as, indeed, on magic everywhere—that, though many of those present must be familiar with them, they should be stated before proceeding with an examination of the processes employed. These ideas are: first, that a representation of a thing may be caused to sustain such a relationship to its original that an effect produced upon the representation will, in some form, be reproduced upon the original; second, that an object may be caused to react upon another object, with which it has been more or less intimately associated, in such a manner that

an effect produced upon the first object will appear in some form upon the second ; and third, that like cures like, whence, if a certain effect which is anticipated be produced artificially in some way, its production in the natural course of events will be partially or entirely prevented.

Protective magic I shall illustrate by some of its applications to the safeguarding of houses, their contents, and their inmates, and to the protection of children ; I shall omit its applications to adults in general, as they are in many cases of the types thus exemplified. One may see often (almost always, in the case of the lower classes), when entering a Japanese house, pasted or otherwise fastened above the doorway, sometimes outside, sometimes within the house, a number of curiously printed papers ; and, frequently, some more familiar object with them—perhaps a shell, a flower, a vegetable, or a packet of food. These things are the amulets whose function it is to guard the house and its occupants against threatened evils of every kind—misfortunes, fires, thieves, demons, pestilential and other diseases, and all other troubles that the careful householder dreads—the papers, the *o-mamori* issued at the shrines of the neighbourhood, or, perhaps, brought by some pilgrim returned from a distant temple famous for its charms, the other things (in most cases) the secular *majinai* recommended by popular tradition. Further, within the house there may be other amulets of the same nature, generally upon the *kamidana*, the shelf whereon the household gods are kept, but often fastened to the walls or to the ceiling-beams along which slide the paper room-partitions.

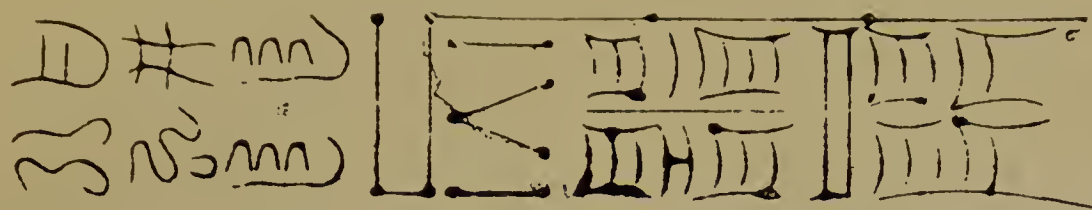
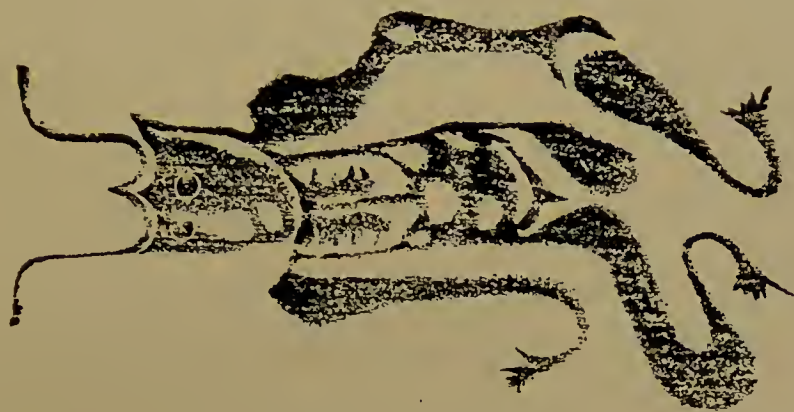
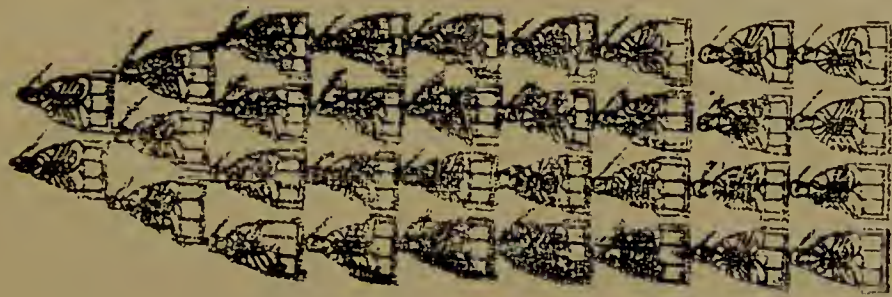
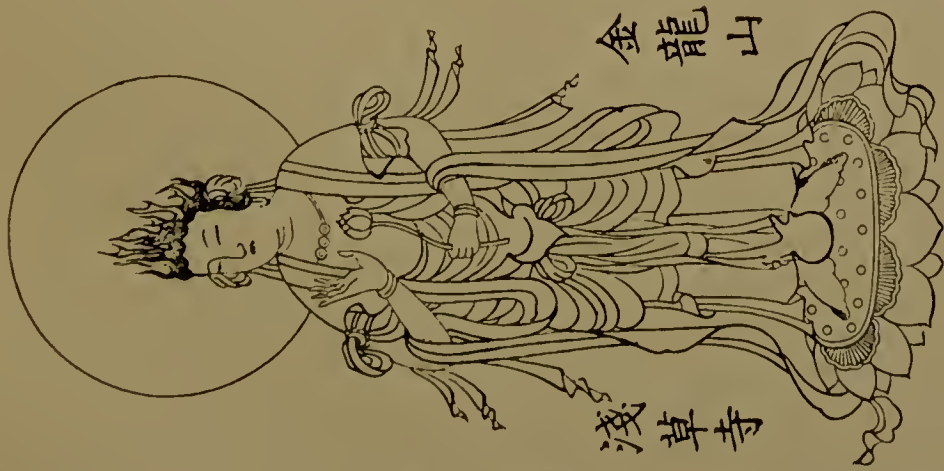
Of the papers, some are single sheets (see Plates I. and II.) open, bearing the name, often with the likeness as well, of some great Deity, such as Kwannon or Fudo, whose protection is believed thus to be secured for the house, or of Deities whose influences are thought to be exercised in particular directions ; others, in principle the same, have been folded and enclosed in envelopes upon which are stated, usually, the name of the temple issuing them, and the purposes for which it is intended that they shall be used (see Plate V. for similar amulets). Most of these charms lie, of course, upon the borderland between religion and magic, for while to some they are mere material evidences of devotion, by which such persons seek to conciliate the favour of the gods, they are to others the material



means by which it becomes possible to bind unseen powers to do that which is desired. Such papers, which are similar in their natures to those which are carried upon the person, are of many varieties, and embody in their different forms many of the principles of magic. There are also numerous protective amulets of other kinds—wooden tablets, images, relics of holy persons, souvenirs, such as lanterns or half-charred fragments of wood, of festivals—to which religious ideas are attached, but of these we can obtain no more than a glimpse in passing.

Of the evils against which the Japanese must guard his home one of the greatest is the entrance of the *oni*, the wicked demons by whom many diseases are caused, and to whom many misfortunes may be traced, yet of whose grotesque forms and queer misadventures the Japanese humorous artist never tires. Each year when (according to the old style) at its end, the winter changes into spring, there is a great clearing out of these demons—the *tsuina* or *oni-yarai*—executed sometimes by a professional caster-out of demons, who goes about from house to house performing his exorcism, sometimes by the head or some lesser member of the household. “Out with the demons, in with good luck,” the first part loudly, the second in a low tone, the performer calls out, scattering about him parched beans or peas, ammunition before which the unwelcome intruders must retreat. Then, to each (or, sometimes, one only) of the door-posts of the entrance, there is fastened, so that the demons may not return, a stick of holly with the head of a dried sardine upon it, which is left in place, often until far into the following year, or even, perhaps, until the next *setsubun* festival.

Shōki, the relentless enemy of all demons, familiar to every lover of Japanese art as the hero of innumerable humorous episodes, sometimes plays the part of guardian of the household. In the Kyōto district (and, probably, also elsewhere, although I have not noted them) one may see small images (see Plate III.), usually about six or eight inches high, of the demon-queller, fashioned of earthenware and placed upon the little sloping roof designed to protect the open front of a house. Shōki himself is an importation from China, so that it is not strange that we should find associated with him, at Kyōto, a form (although one I have not chanced to meet in China itself) of the Chinese belief that demons prefer to travel in straight



AMULETS FOR PROTECTION.

PAPER AMULETS ISSUED BY TEMPLES.

AGAINST RATS  
AND MICE.



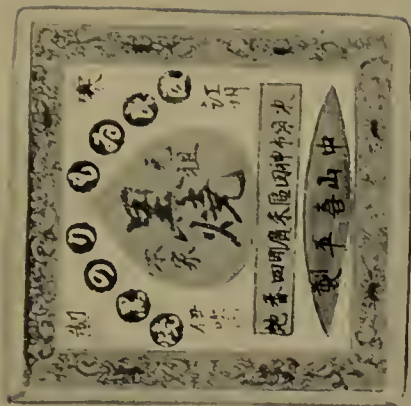




STATUETTE OF SHOKI.



BOW AND ARROW, WITH WAND.  
AMULETS, FOR HOUSES, FOR PROTECTION AGAINST DEMONS.



LOVE CHARM, SHOWING EXTERIOR WRAPPER AND  
JAR CONTAINING THE IMORI.



lines. Should it happen that the doors of two shops on the opposite sides of a street stand directly facing each other, and it be found that the trade of one or both be bad, the conclusion evident is that the demons find it an easy journey from one shop to the other and, consequently, haunt them in preference to less comfortable retreats. Then Shōki, with his sword in readiness, is set over one or both of the doorways, in order that the demons, finding their pathway barred, may take their unpleasant attentions elsewhere.

Against destruction by fire, which, in a land of wooden houses, is a much more tangible peril than are the demons, the Japanese housewife has many devices, and she takes refuge in printed or written papers, religious or secular verbal recitations, and numerous small observances or ceremonies of the same nature as those found in other connections. Of these safeguards I shall give but one, a ceremony in use at Yokohama for the purpose of protecting a house from the spreading to it, by sparks falling upon its inflammable materials, of a conflagration near by, a ceremony which illustrates beautifully both some of the main principles of magic and the contact which often occurs between magic and religious ceremonial. A cup of water having been offered before the picture of a certain Fire-God, sparks are struck, by means of a flint and steel, so as to fall into the water, after which the latter is thrown upon the roof of the house. The ideas underlying the purely magical portion of the ceremony are, of course, fairly clear—as the water has extinguished the sparks falling into it, so it will extinguish, by virtue of the magical properties imparted to it, any sparks which may fall on the roof upon which it has been thrown.

For protection from lightning one of the most common ceremonies consists in the burning of three incense-sticks during a thunderstorm. Another, also of great reputation, is the repetition of the word "*Kuwabara*," "Mulberry-plantation," which Mr. Aston (*Shinto*, p. 337) says is for the purpose of suggesting to the Thunder-God "that the place is a mulberry-grove, which, it is believed, is never struck by lightning." Less well-known, I think, is the magical application of music (which is used also in the magical treatment of certain diseases) to the protection of the house during a thunderstorm.

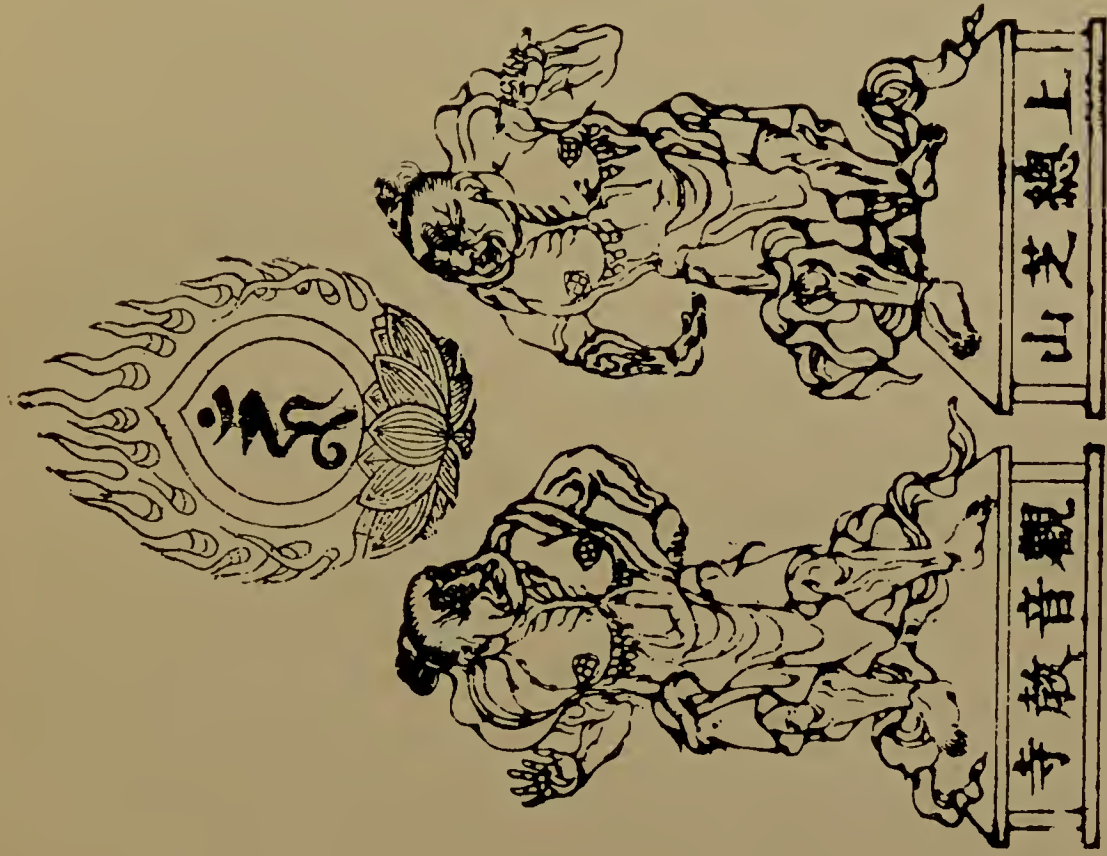
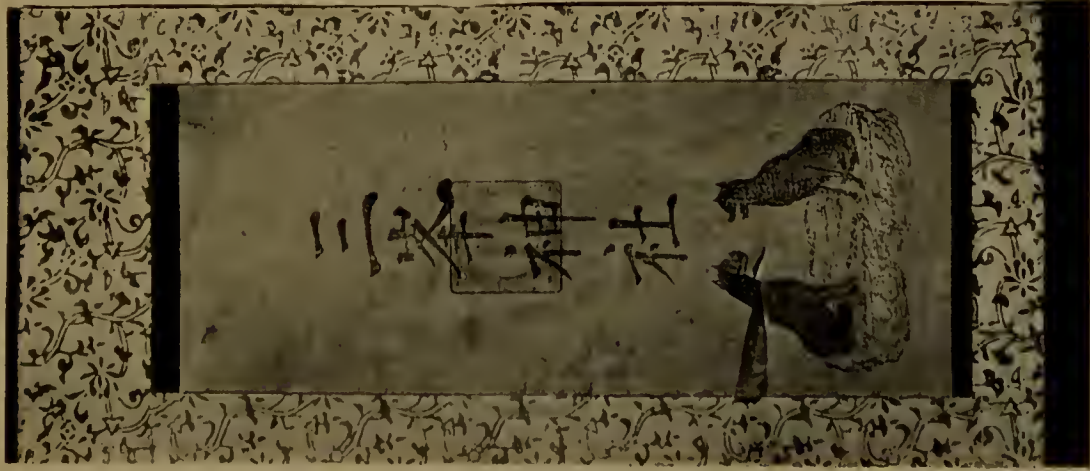
Concerning the preference for the verbal charm commonly

used to secure protection during an earthquake—the well-known “*Manzairaku*,” “Ten thousand years of happiness,” an expression used in congratulating a person—which is repeated many times, as rapidly as possible, during the trembling, I have seen no explanation given.

Raised but little above the ground, and lightly and openly built, the Japanese house would offer inducements to burglars far less daring and enterprising than those to whose operations it is exposed. We find, therefore, as we are led to expect, numerous house-amulets and various ceremonies directed especially against thieves. Of the paper charms two, in use at and near Tōkyō, are particularly worthy of note, not so much because they are very frequently to be seen pasted above doorways as because of the character of their guardianship. The first (see Plate III.; the specimen shown has been mounted as a *kakemono* and hung up within a house) bears the picture of two *yama-inu*, wild dogs, the attendants of the Deity worshipped at Mitumine-san, in Chichibu, and is used with the expectation that these animals will have somewhat the same effect as actual watch-dogs would have. The second (see Plate III.) has pictures of the Ni-ō, “The Two Dêva Kings,” by whom the gates of Buddhist temples are guarded, and is thought to secure the services of these powerful beings as watchmen; it is sometimes attached to the doorway by its upper edge alone, in order that the Ni-ō should not be hampered by their feet being fastened down.

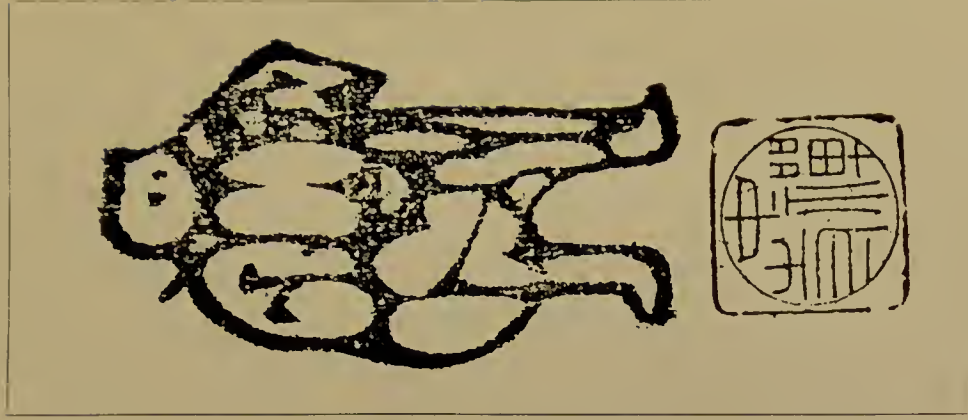
Of charms to be performed, one of the best known consists (in what I take to be, perhaps, its most illustrative form) in the placing at night of a sandal of the head of the household, covered by an inverted metal basin bearing a kitchen-knife, edge towards the door, upon its upturned bottom, near to the entrance doorway. In this arrangement the original idea was, I imagine, to instil into the mind of the intending burglar the impression that the head of the household, represented by his sandal, was hidden, armed in readiness for attack. The performance is a counter-charm against a charm used by thieves to cause the occupants of a house to sleep soundly during their operations, and which therefore lies beyond our province; and the magical methods of finding the thief, or of punishing him if he is not to be found, belong rather to divinatory and baneful magic respectively than to protective.





FOR PROTECTION AGAINST THEFT.

PAPER AMULETS CONCERNED WITH THEFT.



FOR INJURING A THIEF.





To keep vermin, such as insects, rats, mice, snails, or snakes out of the house, there are numerous charms, most of which take the form of printed or written papers (see Plate I. for printed form). One, rather amusing, quoted by Mr. Aston (*Nihongi*, p. 60, in footnote), which will serve as an example is a written notice, to be pasted up on the route used by the ants to enter the house, "Admittance, one cash each person," on which he comments, "The economical ant goes no further."

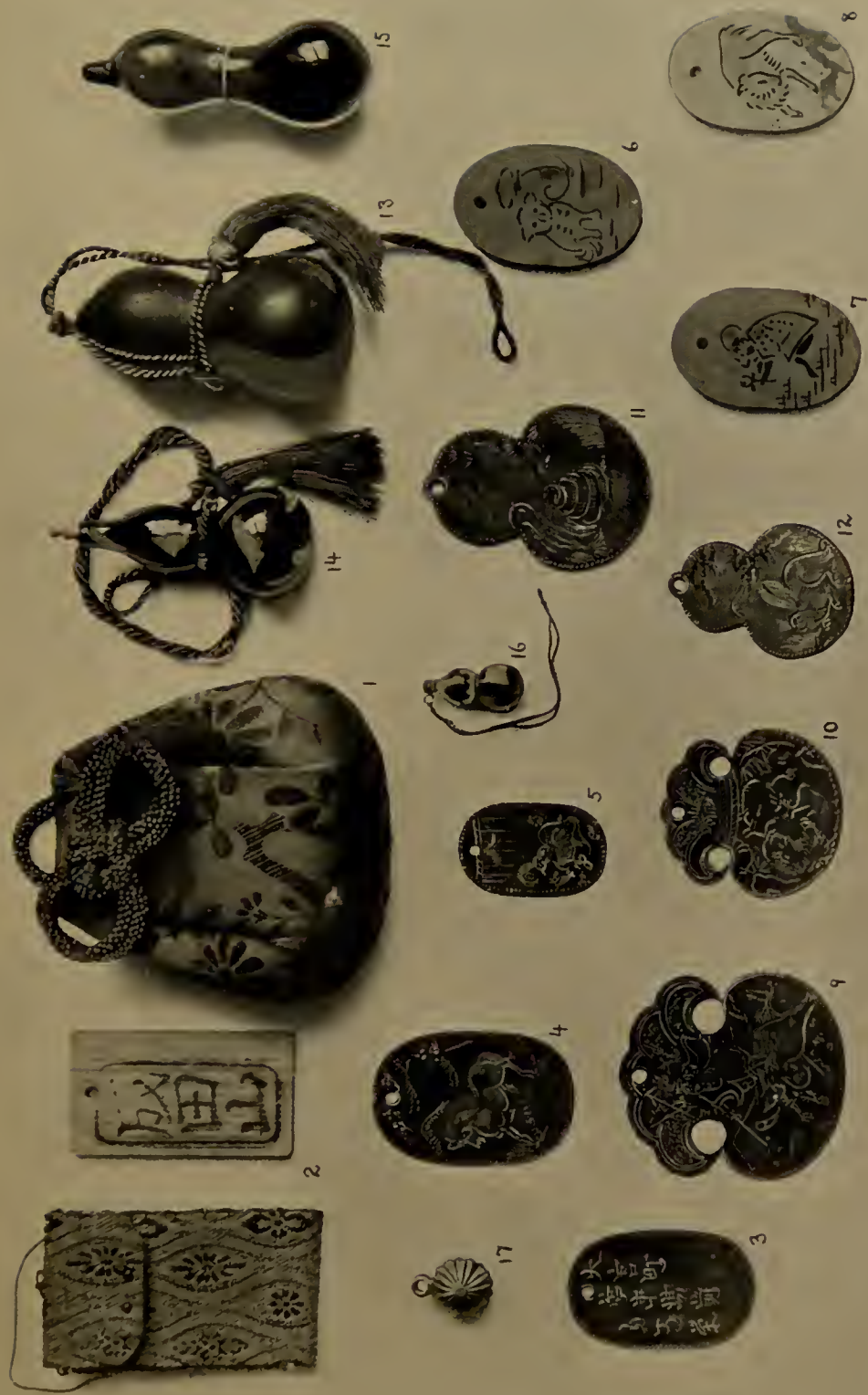
In Japan, just as elsewhere, a considerable portion of the household magic, both ceremonial and amuletic, is centred about the children of the family. Of ceremonial magic we have already had, and will have, many typical illustrations; of the amuletic, especially where it consists in the wearing of objects on the person, we get some of our best examples in the things which children carry. First amongst these, of course, come the religious amulets, small folded papers usually, for general protection or against the misfortunes and ills to which the little ones are liable, which are carried in a small, purse-shaped bag (Plate IV., Fig. 1) fastened to the *obi*. This little bag is generally of silk, often prettily figured, and is called the "*o-mamori-kinchaku*," "honourable-protection-purse."

A religious amulet of a slightly different type, which, although suitable for persons of any age and very often carried by adults, is an especial favourite with parents for the protection of their children, is the small branded wooden block (Plate IV.) Fig. 2, where a case for carrying this amulet is also shown, issued by the great Temple of Fudo, at Narita, near Tōkyō. It is favoured, not merely because it is considered to be a powerful general protection, but also because its special virtue is that it is a protection from injury by falling, a mishap to which young children are particularly exposed. Should it chance that the wearer of one of these amulets fall in such a manner that, but for its miraculous intervention he would be injured, the block takes, it is believed, the injury upon itself and breaks, while its bearer remains unhurt. When this has occurred the fragments are returned to the Temple at Narita, accompanied by a monetary offering, as a mark of gratitude and in order to secure further protection from the same source, and a new block is obtained. I have known several Europeans at Yokohama who, to please Japanese friends, have worn the

Narita-san amulet, and of two instances in which they figured, in which threatened injury was escaped, according to the belief of these friends, at the expense of the blocks, for in both cases these were afterwards found to be broken.

Almost every young child wears, attached to its girdle, besides the charm-bag, a little ticket called its "*maigo-fuda*" (*mai-go*, "a child that has wandered from home;" *fuda*, "a ticket"), upon which are given the name and the address of the parents in order that, should the child stray from the neighbourhood of its home, it may be brought back (Plate IV., Figs. 3 to 12 inclusive). These tickets are usually of wood or metal, painted or engraved, as the case may be, with the inscription only on one side. On the reverse they may be blank, or may bear a crest or some purely conventional design, but (at least in the vicinity of Tōkyō) they are much more likely to hold a representation of some one of the animals of the Chinese Cycle, the animal chosen for each child being that one of the twelve which governed the year of the child's birth, and which is thought to be caused, by this proceeding, to guard it (Plate IV.; Fig. 3, shows the particulars relating to the wearer of a *maigo-fuda*, Fig. 4, the Horse, Fig. 5, the Rat, the originals of three being of brass; Fig. 6, the Dog, Fig. 7, the Monkey, Fig. 8, the Goat, the originals of these being of wood; Fig. 9, the Boar, here bearing a Deity, Fig. 10, the Tiger, Fig. 11, the Snake, and Fig. 12, the Hare, the originals of these being of brass or of hard white metal). Various other forms of this belief, more or less similar, occur in applications to adults as well as to children, but for these we shall not digress. The *maigo-fuda* may act also in other ways as charms; they may be purse-shaped, for example (Plate IV., Figs. 9 and 10), in order that the child may grow up to be prosperous, or they may have the contour of a bottle-gourd (Figs. 11 and 12).

A part of the equipment of almost every small child consists of a bottle-gourd, either real or in effigy, which is generally supposed to preserve it from injury by falling, although often even this degraded form of the original belief is unknown, and the gourd survives merely as a conventional ornament whose meaning has been quite forgotten. Sometimes genuine gourds (Plate IV., Figs. 13 and 14, the original of the latter being lacquered) are worn, obtained, apparently, by a dwarfing



1, CHARM BAG; 2, NARITA AMULET AND CASE; 3-13, *Maigo-Fuda*; 13-16, GOURDS 17, BELL.

CHILDREN'S AMULETS.





process, but more often copies, in wood (Fig. 16) or metal, bone or ivory, lacquer, glass, agate (Fig. 15), jade, or some other material, are used. They may serve as *netsukes* to hold the charm-bags, or they may be sewn upon these bags or hung as ornaments from them, or, as we have seen, they may act as *maigo-fuda*. The bottle-gourd is a favourite with old people, because of its preservative virtues against falling, a circumstance which accounts, I think, even more than the convenience of their form, for the unusually large proportion of gourd-shaped *netsukes* which are to be found.

Many young children wear at the waist, in addition to the objects just described, a little bell (Fig. 17), whose tinkling is usually faint and sometimes all but inaudible, to which there is ascribed the same virtues as to the little gourd. I was often assured, by parents whose children wore it, that this bell is not a *majinai*—in one case, indeed, rationalism went so far as to claim that its feeble sound served to tell the mother in what part of the house the child was playing—yet a sufficient number of others told me that its intention is to preserve the child from injury through falling to show me that that idea concerning it is now the prevailing one. In this case, however, we have clear evidence as to what was formerly the actual purpose of the little bell, evidence which still stretches from England, with its baby's coral-handled rattle, to the eastern edge of China, and whose traces go far back of recorded history, evidence which proves that it was to keep afar, by its sound, all wicked demons by whom the child might be injured or affrighted. Many instances might be given of the present employment of a bell for this purpose, but it suffices to point to China, where the babies wear small bronze bells attached to their ankles or at their waists, or bells of silver amongst their ornaments, and where, as in Japan, minor explanatory reasons have grown up. In China, however, the original reason still remains clear and predominant—as my interpreter at Shanghai expressed it, “Bell makee sing, Devil no come.”

Of the innumerable children's amulets which are used otherwise than upon the person, there is only one to which I wish particularly to refer, the curious picture (see Plate V., for two forms) which, it is believed, will keep children from crying. This picture is known popularly as the “*oni-no-nembutsu*,” the

*oni* who recites the prayer *Namu Amida Butsu*, and represents a demon clothed as a religious mendicant and bearing a gong and a hammer wherewith to strike it. Should a child be addicted to crying, this picture may be fastened, by its upper edge only, upon a wall or a screen near to the child's head; or (according to another housewife) it may be kept near to the child's bed, and, whenever the crying commences, may be held up, inverted, until the crying stops. It is used, generally, for the benefit of children too young to be terrified by its appearance. In the curio-shops there are sometimes to be found small figures of the *oni-no-nembutsu*; but these I have been told, are only for ornament, and are not for magical use.

The magic connected with sleep appears to be mostly in the form of minor observances, such as verbal charms to cause one to rest well, and gestures or amulets to preserve one from nightmares. There are several such charms to be used after awaking from an evil dream, one of the most familiar of which is the saying, three times in succession, of "*Baku-kuye*." The *baku*, which is thus called upon, is an animal, prosaically defined in the dictionaries as a tapir, which, according to an ancient Chinese classic quoted by Professor Chamberlain, in shape resembles a goat, but has nine tails, four ears, and its eyes upon its back, or (according to another classic) has the trunk of an elephant, the eyes of a rhinoceros, the tail of a bull, and the legs of a tiger. This beast is believed to have the power of swallowing evil dreams, and the dreamer of them, upon awaking from one, calls for it to come quickly and consume his vision, lest, I was told, the latter occur in reality (since not all dreams go by contraries). It was with the idea of keeping off altogether such dreams that the *baku* was formerly pictured upon the pillows of the nobility, or that a sketch of it was placed near to a sleeper. The *baku* was, apparently, formerly credited with more general powers to avert evil, and therefore, probably, its figure was placed upon some of the wooden pillars at the mortuary shrine of Ieyasu, at Nikko.

There are also various charms to cause the sleeper to awaken at any hour desired. One of these is a certain verse, by a famous poet, in which the dawn is referred to, which is to be recited three times before retiring to bed. Another, in which the magical element is more pronounced, calls upon the roof-



PICTURES USED AS CHARMS FOR STOPPING A CHILD'S CRYING.



beams, in a certain verse, to witness that the reciter wishes to arise at that hour, and concludes, after the recital three times of the verse, with the striking three times of the wooden pillow which is to be used.

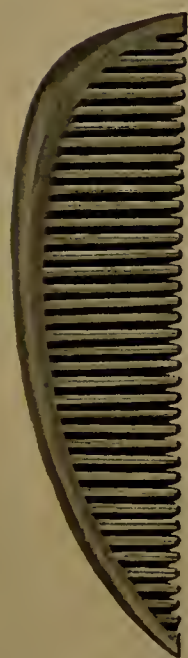
Many charms are connected with the preparation or preservation of food, whether cooked or raw. Some of these charms seem to be purely empirical, superstitions based, apparently, on an occurrence noted by mere chance, and with no real bearing upon the result produced. Others, however, have a skeleton to which, from the point of view of reasoning, some measure at least of plausibility may be assigned, while there are, finally, those which are based upon sound reasoning, or whose bases fall but little short of this, and which are mistakenly classed as *majinai*. For an illustration of the first class we may take the method of removing bitterness from a cucumber, by cutting a piece from one end and then rubbing its new surface upon the place from which it has been separated; or the causing of potatoes which are likely to be hard after boiling to become soft in the cooking, by slicing them, before cooking, with a knife held in the left hand. In the second class we may place the charm to cause rice to cook evenly and well by setting a small tub of water upon the wooden lid of the rice-kettle, if we assume that the original purpose was merely that of keeping down the lid, in order that the steam might be the better held in. For an example of the third class I think that we may take the *majinai* to cause *azuki* beans to cook evenly, which consists of a narrow strip of bamboo-skin (a material always at hand in the Japanese kitchen) tied in a knot and boiled with the beans, since it has the result, probably, of keeping the beans continually and automatically stirred about.

There are many charms, also, connected with the consumption of food or drink, such as those against choking by food, against poisoning, or to aid digestion. As fish form so large an item of the Japanese diet, it is a fairly common occurrence to have a bone stuck in the throat. A remedy for this commonly used consists in the rubbing of the outside of the throat with a piece of ivory; but what has led to the adoption of that particular substance in preference to any other, unless it be that its soft and smooth grain makes its contact with the skin pleasanter than that of any other likely to be at hand, I do not know. As an

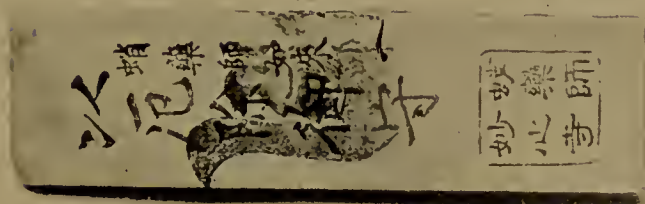
improvement upon this simple operation the words "*U no nodo*," "Cormorant's throat," may be repeated during the stroking, because the cormorant, which has a large throat, is able to swallow its fish-food, bones and all, without difficulty. Some people, although their belief, I think, is not common, go so far as to consider, by extending the virtues of ivory, that the mere use of ivory chopsticks for eating will prevent bones from catching in the throat. There are, besides, small ceremonies, and verbal charms, to induce the troublesome intruder to go its way in peace.

The hasty consumption of much soft food, and especially of rice, is responsible for the variety of charms to prevent or to cure choking at meals. A very interesting preventive charm for this purpose, which is used at Tōkyō and in the district near by, consists of the tiny images of a pair of pigeons (Plate VI., Figs. 1 and 2), which are set, at each meal, before the person dreading choking, and to each of which in turn a bit of whatever food is feared is offered, with the chopsticks, before the person himself partakes of it. The explanation given of their undoubted virtue is that pigeons, having large throats, are never choked by their food, and that they have, therefore, the power to protect from choking persons who show respect to their representatives. The true explanation, however, is quite simple—whenever the person eating remembers to feed the pigeons first he will remember also to eat slowly and carefully of the course feared, and whenever he does not, the charm, naturally, does not apply, and his choking in that event but strengthens the belief in its efficacy. The little images, which are of various kinds, ranging from bits of earthenware with a few rude lines, and two short wires representing the legs, to neatly moulded and prettily coloured pieces of porcelain, are sold as recognised *majinai* at many of the booths in the grounds of the Asakusa Temple at Tōkyō, and represent, I think, the pigeons which congregate there and whose rapid clearing up of the grain thrown to them by the worshippers and holiday-makers doubtless suggested to some ingenious mind the charm as practised. I am inclined to think that we have, in the use of these little images, the first step in the growth of a popular superstition, for I have not seen the charm, nor heard it alluded to, elsewhere than at Tōkyō and Yokohama, and even in those cities it was not commonly known,

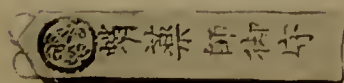




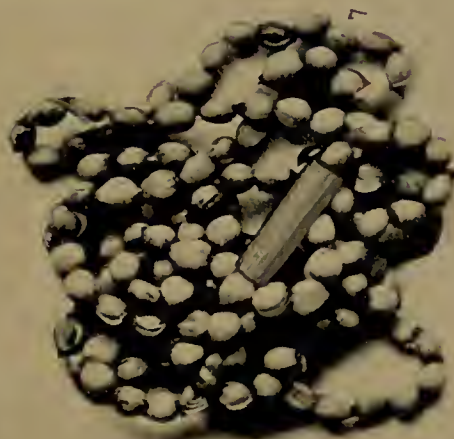
3



4



5



7



1

2



6

AMULETS, ETC., FOR PREVENTING OR RELIEVING BODILY TROUBLES.





though all the many sellers of the images at Asakusa were acquainted with it. Having secured a firm foothold in its present form, by its real efficacy, it seems by no means unlikely that this charm may in time be modified, and perhaps the belief arise that the figure of a pigeon set before one at meals, or, even, merely carried, will have the desired effect.

There is magic, too, connected with the family's clothing, and its manufacture—small ceremonies or observances at the cutting out of a garment, in order that it may be durable and always free from danger of injury, and verses to be recited to cause the disentanglement of twisted threads to be simple, or to find a lost needle. And there is a beautiful shining green beetle, called the "*tama-mushi*" ("jewel insect"), which is sometimes placed, often living, and left permanently, after its death, amongst a person's laid-away clothes, in order that he or she may always have an abundance of clothing thereafter.

I have heard of comparatively little magic connected with the personal appearance, excepting of the negative variety, such as the belief that one should always hang damp towels, to dry, well smoothed out, lest the face become wrinkled. Of similar nature is a former practice of little girls, the closing and covering of the mouth when a white horse was seen, lest the horse look upon their teeth, and these, in consequence, always thereafter be difficult to blacken; but since the custom of blackening the teeth after marriage has gone out of fashion, this belief, naturally, has tended to become obsolete. There is positive magic, however, in the comb (Plate VI., Fig. 3, which shows also the envelope in which it is sold) for straightening wavy hair, an adornment disliked by most Japanese, and in such remedies, rather numerous, as those for the cure of disfiguring skin-diseases.

With these, however, we enter the domain of curative magic, a region of such extent, though taken up for the most part, in Japan, by minor practices, that we can glance at it only in the most cursory manner in passing. Amulets of all kinds are used, religious and secular, carried upon the person, or fastened up within or without the house; there are charms to be written upon the body, and others to be swallowed, dry, or dissolved in liquid; there are waters to be used as lotions, and others to be drunk; there are incantations to be recited and music to be played; there are objects, religious or secular, to be destroyed

after the troublesome evils have been transferred to them, and conversely, objects whereby the healing power of a god or of an image may be transferred and applied to the afflicted part—and even all these do not include the whole of the magical means and methods by which the distressed attempt to alleviate their sufferings. The treatment of accidental injuries alone would require a section for itself, as would, respectively, those for the remedying of natural afflictions, for the cure of ordinary illnesses, and for the relief of epidemic sicknesses, while another, properly would need be devoted to the special means used for preservation against various maladies (Plate VI., Fig. 4, a paper charm against sicknesses, and its envelope; Fig. 5, a paper charm against arm troubles, and its envelope; Fig. 6, an ornament worn in the hair, against headache; Fig. 7, a string of seeds, used as a protection against a stiff shoulder).

We have next to examine the magic for the control, by the operator, of the life or the feelings of some other person, without that person's knowledge, as applied, for example, to attracting people or to sending them away, to causing them to love where otherwise they would have been indifferent, or to injuring them.

There are various practices for the control of a child's life by means with which the child is in only indirect connection, of which we shall take, as illustrative, some of those concerned with the disposal of the placenta shortly after the child's birth. It is thought that the burial place of the placenta exercises a considerable effect upon the child's future, not alone with regard to its situation, but with regard as well to the circumstances surrounding the placenta when buried there, and this spot was formerly (though in the cities this is not usually the case at present), in consequence, carefully chosen. There is, for an example of the effect of these circumstances, a well-known belief that a child will have, throughout its life, an especial aversion toward whatever form of vermin—insect, rat, snake, or the like—which first crosses the ground beneath which the placenta lies. This belief in the continuance of the connection between the child and the placenta finds other concrete illustrations in the burial, in the case of a boy, of pen and ink with the placenta, in order that he may become a good writer, and of a needle, in the case of a girl, that she may become skilful in sewing.

Charms for attracting the public in general, although the house forms so often, in Japan, the place of business as well as the residence, belong somewhat beyond our present discussion. Not so, however, those numerous ones for bringing to the operator some one person in particular, of which we may select, as our example, the one employing a certain familiar verse of poetry in which the speaker, waiting upon Matsuo's shore, and burning with longing, calls to her beloved. Of the several forms which this charm assumes I quote one given in *The Nightless City* (2nd ed., p. 144):—the verse having been written upon a sheet of paper, and after it "I beg that so-and-so will come by such-and-such a day," and the name of the Deity usually worshipped by the operator, the whole is fastened, inverted, upon a wall.

Of love-charms, pure and simple, a multitude exist, despite the infrequency of love-marriages in Japan. Of amulets for that purpose there are, for example, the ones described by Mr. Hearn in *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (1894 ed., p. 303), as obtainable at the Yaegaki Temple, and containing two tiny doll-figures (*hina*) in antique costumes, the wife folded to the husband's breast by one long-sleeved arm. These are marked "August wedlock-producing '*hina*' of the Temple of Yaegaki of Izumo," and are bought only by people in love, and in order to secure the union desired; should marriage with the beloved one take place it is proper to return the charm to the Temple. Sympathetic magic of another type without the religious element introduced into the Yaegaki amulet, appears in the practice of carrying a hair from the head of his loved one knotted with one of his own, by an unsuccessful suitor, for the purpose of securing her affection. The effect of the knotted hairs, which should be carried by the lover while his passion continues, is said to be such that within a week or two, generally, from the time the charm is begun, the obdurate fair one yields.

But the love-charm most worthy of our attention, I think, not alone because of the conceptions underlying it, but also because of its common employment and the circumstance that it is an article manufactured commercially, is that known as "*imori no kuroyaki*," "imori's cinders." It is a very well-known substance, which can be prepared by any one, though the town-dweller finds it simpler to obtain its ingredients, almost ready for use,



from some vendor of the drugs used in the ancient system of medicine. Thus bought (see Plate II.), it consists of the remains of a pair, male and female, presumably, of incinerated *imori* (a kind of red-bellied newt), within a small earthenware jar which has evidently served as their tomb. According to the printed paper of instructions accompanying them, the *imori* are to be removed from the jar, and crushed to a fine powder, which is then divided into two parts. One of these parts is to be carried, in the form of a packet, by the lover, while the other is, if possible, to be placed (also in the form of a packet) secretly within the clothing of the beloved one, or, failing this, is to be sprinkled secretly upon her hair. A Japanese friend told me that it is thought that not only is the powder efficacious should it alight upon any part of the loved one's person, but that its action is quite independent of the intention of the person who throws it, and that several amusing Japanese tales have been based upon the falling of the powder elsewhere than upon the person aimed at. A second well-recognised use of the powder is described in the directions: should an infant dislike its nurse she has only to carry one packet of the powder, and to place the other, without the child's knowledge, in its charm bag, for the aversion immediately to be overcome.

The idea underlying this charm is probably, I think, somewhat to the effect that during life the bodies of the two *imori* had for each other a natural and powerful attraction, and that although this attraction is satisfied by the mixture of their ashes, it is brought out again when the mixed ashes are divided into two portions. When this has been done the attraction is exerted between the separated parts, and these, through their contact with the persons to be affected, influence those persons by a kind of sympathetic action upon them. Whether this be the explanation, or not, of the action thought to be exerted, the choice of the *imori* comes, I imagine, from a pun, for if *imori* be pronounced as *imo-ri* it may be taken as meaning, literally, "woman (or even, perhaps, 'darling' or 'dear')—victory (or gain);" whence, of course, the association of that particular animal with a love-charm becomes clear.

There are many charms connected with the other aspects of love—charms for the timid suitor, or for him who would be "off with the old love"; for the woman who fears lest she shall



have no husband, and for her who, having one, fears lest a rival's attractions may take him from her; charms for the cure of fickleness, and charms to cause the beloved one to speak her mind truly; and, though here we encroach upon other divisions of magic, charms for securing answers to those questions which forever trouble the true lover or his sweetheart, or to compass the injury of a rival or of an unfaithful lover.

Many and various are the methods of divination practised by the younger members of the family—dropping a hair-pin into the matting of the floor and counting the straws, on the principle of “He loves me, he loves me not,” between its point and the border of the mat wherein it has fixed itself; playing with strings, made of twisted paper, from whose entanglements the answers sought are read; drawing in turn, though nowadays more for amusement than with any idea of the truth of the message thus conveyed, little folded printed slips of paper, each wrapped in a bit of seaweed, from the string bearing them, such as are sold at the small shops dealing in cakes and toys and miscellaneous odds-and-ends; and a multitude of others.

For the elders there are processes of divinatory magic, some simple, some so complex that they are usually left to professional fortune-tellers, which pass by small gradations to that edge of magic beyond which lie the explanations of dreams, the reading of omens, the interpretation of marks, and the like, and by which the auspiciousness of an occasion is tested, or the weather foretold. Amongst these processes are the methods of detecting a thief by divination, or by ordeal, which is closely allied to it. The former we may illustrate by the half-religious plan of writing the names of all the suspected persons upon a clean cup, filling the cup with clean water upon which floats a certain sacred charm, and then praying, in order that the bit of paper may float to the culprit's name. As an example of the latter, we have the drinking, by all the persons suspected, of *sake* in which some *kobu* [or *kombu*, a kind of edible sea-weed] has been steeped, in order that the culprit may be betrayed by the change which will take place in the colour of his countenance.

We return to the magic of control, from which we have momentarily glanced aside, in the charms for calling up the spirits of the dead or the living. One of these, for the former, which is sometimes tried by girls for the summoning of

the ghost of a dead lover, is given in *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* (1881 ed., p. 390): The operator, having placed a hundred rush-lights in a lamp, then recites a certain incantation of a hundred lines, removing and blowing out one of the lights at the end of each line, until, when the last line has been spoken and the last light extinguished, the ghost summoned appears in the darkness. A charm for the latter purpose—the calling up of the spirit of a living person who is distant from the operator—was given me at Yokohama. When every one about is asleep, say at about two o'clock in the morning (the "hour of the Ox," generally chosen, I was told, for magical ceremonies which, like this one, require secret performance, for the reason that few people are then awake; it corresponds to our "dead of night"), the operator places a rice-bowl in the middle of the floor of a perfectly darkened room, and lays upon it a razor, edge upward. Then, leaning forward until the face is above the edge of the razor, he (or, more probably, she) calls out the person's name, and, when the spirit answers, puts the question to it. Sometimes, however, the answers will not come in this way, though then they come to the operator in a dream, after he has retired to sleep after the ceremony. But should it happen that any one near by is awake during the performance, the charm, unfortunately, will have no effect at all.

Last of all, we have baneful magic, used for the satisfaction of private revenge or of jealousy, as an aid to justice, or even, in a diluted and almost innocuous form, to secure such minor ends as the relief of momentary annoyance. Here there are first those charms in which is applied the ancient and world-wide belief—probably familiar to most of the audience through those tales of Europe a few centuries ago in which a waxen image, to be stuck with pins or slowly melted, plays some part—the belief that any injury inflicted upon the image of a person will be caused to appear, in some form, as a real injury to the person himself. Such charms seem, judging from the frequency with which they are spoken of, to be very well known, but that they are, unless performed as acts of justice, strongly condemned, is shown by a popular saying to the effect that their performance means the digging of two graves, the victim's and the operator's. In one class of charms of this type in Japan the

victim's image, or his picture, is nailed to a sacred tree, and the outraged Deity is bidden to take revenge upon him for the desecration by causing his sickening and death; but this class lies, of course, a little beyond our boundaries. There is, however, a charm with the same intention—that, usually, of injuring a rival in love—which lacks the religious element, and is therefore of a little different nature, but which is suitable for home performance. It is particularly interesting because of the recent origin of at least one of its details. Having obtained a photograph of her victim the operator boils it in oil.

Where the intended victim of the charm is a thief who has escaped with his plunder, there seem to be few scruples as to the effect which it is desired to produce. One of the best-known of the ceremonies for causing injury to a thief has for its basis a paper, issued by a small shrine in the country, bearing a rude print (see Plate III.) of Daikoku walking, apparently, called the "*Hashiri Daikoku*," "Fleeing Daikoku," and is used especially for the capture of persons, such as defaulters or thieving servants, who have run away. One of the papers is placed upon a wall, with the figure head downward, and a pin or a needle is then stuck through each of the figure's feet and through whatever parts of its body the operator's sense of justice inclines him to injure in the thief—only the throat must be left unpierced, lest the victim die—and a promise is made that if the thief be caught the pins will be removed and the picture set upright. The result aimed at primarily is the laming of the thief, so that he may be captured by those who pursue him, and this result, I have been assured by a Japanese friend who had occasion to try the charm, is actually produced. Curiously, the other virtues assigned to the pictures of the "*Hashiri Daikoku*" are eminently pacific: carried as amulets (for which purpose they are sold mounted in various ways) they will prevent disaster when travelling by water, or drunk in water they will make childbirth easy and painless.

There are several methods for laming a burglar by working upon his footprints, which illustrate the magic which operates upon something with which the intended victim has been in intimate contact. A form of one of these is the burning, upon one or more of the footprints which may be discovered, of a



particularly large *moxa*, which, having been lighted, is fanned in order that it may be the more briskly consumed.

Closely allied to such methods, in its underlying principle, is a popular charm for ridding one's self of a guest who has outstayed his welcome, a common form of which consists in the burning of three *moxas* in succession upon the bottom of one of the guest's *geta* (the wooden clogs which are left outside when one enters a house). This should preferably be done in the middle of the sole, between the projections which come into contact with the ground ; but since a very noticeable mark, whose presence would cause the departed guest to feel insulted, would thus be produced, the operation is generally, though at the risk of a lessened effect, performed upon the wearing surface of the clog. For the same purpose there are also charms of the type in which an image is worked upon, but here the victim is represented, instead of by a more formal image, by a broom, clothed with a towel, or something similar, and stood upon the floor, to which the operator may beckon from without the room, or to which is whispered over and over again the request, "So-and-so, please to go away ; So-and-so, please to go away." And with these, I think, this lengthy paper may fittingly be concluded.

After the lecture the Chairman invited any remarks or criticisms.

Mrs. FRENCH SHELDON asked whether the charms used in Japan were ever treated with any degree of levity—whether, for instance, the children ever used their charms as toys, also as to what endowed the charms and gave them their power after manufacture.

The LECTURER did not know of any case in which they were used as toys, though very often toys were made into charms. Neither was there any process of endowment that he knew of—at any rate not in the case of the children's or business or other charms which were used purely secularly. Temple charms underwent a process of endowment.

Miss DE LOREZ (*Visitor*) said that it seemed to her that the whole subject of magic and of current superstitions had been treated too lightly in the West. It would be interesting to trace the origin of some of the charms spoken of that evening. What if these old superstitions and charms had an origin in something quite reasonable? Take, for example, the idea of harming an enemy by the injuries inflicted on a waxen image. If it were true, as some people believed, that every thought that passed through the brain generated a tiny



electric current, was it very superstitious to think that by concentrating with the intensity of hate one's thoughts on the person of whom the waxen image was the prototype, the vibration set up might be sufficiently strong to reach and injure that person, perhaps even to kill?

There was one more thing she would like to say and that was whether the Lecturer would be so kind as to tell them something about the origin of the use of bells in the West. Was there possibly in olden days something of the idea referred to in the paper?

The LECTURER: That was quite the idea. In olden days, for example, with us the bell was kept ringing all the time a dead body was outside the church or consecrated ground; once inside the sacred surroundings protected it sufficiently. He was quite of the opinion that in many old superstitions it was possible to trace an element of reason, though often quite twisted out of shape.

Miss RICHARDSON gave two examples of charms concerned with the appearance which she had come across in Japan, not mentioned by the Lecturer; one for making the hair black by walking over ploughed fields, and the other for causing it to grow thickly by cutting off a tress and placing it on a road or path where many feet would pass and it would thus be trampled upon. She also remembered one, the object of which was to bring fine weather. Two little dolls were hung in the breeze, and, if fine weather came, they were soaked in *sake* and finally thrown into pure running water.

The LECTURER said he had not heard of the two charms mentioned for making the hair black and thick, but there was a charm for bringing fine weather which was fairly well known in which dolls were hung from the roof. In the charm just mentioned the dolls were no doubt put into *sake* to please them, as a reward for bringing fine weather, and then into running water because they were thus disposed of in a clean manner.

Mr. HARDING-SMITH (*Member of Council, J.S.*) asked if the superstition of the evil eye was extant as far east as Japan? It was a superstition very universal in Europe, and he would like to know whether it extended to Japan.

The LECTURER said he would not venture to offer a definite opinion on that point; he had not been able to trace it in Japan, which was strange, since it is a very popular superstition in China; it might, however, have died out in Japan.

Dr. Hildburgh then showed the audience a soldier's scarf, worn for protection during the late war, containing one thousand stitches, each worked by a different woman.

Mr. OFFORD, M.J.S., said that with regard to the waxen images, many records of the making of these could be found in Macedonian and Assyrian history. The superstition of waxen images being able to injure any one extended all over Mesopotamia and Egypt. In the latter country, for example, an image of a crocodile was supposed to be a protection against crocodile bites if it was gradually melted as travellers passed in their boats along the banks of the Nile.

Mr. CALDERON (*Visitor*) asked if any particular significance was to be attached to the hanging of images upside down?

The LECTURER said he thought it was generally done with the object of displeasing the deity or whoever it was meant to represent, who, in order to get rid of his discomfort, would drive away the evil.

The CHAIRMAN said he would like to say one word as to the importance of investigating these charms. He quite agreed with Miss de Lorez that so-called superstitions should seldom be cast on one side without investigation, for one could never tell when one might come across a fact of importance. As an example a real source of knowledge had lately been obtained by the investigations by the Bureau of Ethnology at Washington regarding a charm used by the Hopi Indians in America for the cure of rattlesnake bites. He would like, therefore, to emphasise the importance of investigation into these charms in the event of something of real value being discovered when so doing.

Mr. MARCUS HUISH (*Vice-Chairman of Council, J.S.*) remarked that it might be said that the paper read that evening concerned many trifles which were rapidly passing away, but which were of value to be recorded. In England efforts were being made to place folk-lore on record, as this too was rapidly passing away. As editor of the Japan Society's *Transactions*, he had much pleasure in proposing a hearty vote of thanks for a paper which would prove of great value in that publication. The vote, having been seconded by Mr. Phené Spiers (*Member of Council, J.S.*), was put to the Meeting and carried unanimously.









